

MACAULAY'S CHARACTER OF JAMES II

285

to Paschall, is in the Bodleian, and is reproduced in volume iii of the Collectanea of the Oxford Historical Society,

There it serves to illustrate a number of letters addressed

by the Earl of Clarendon to the Earl of Abingdon to inform

him of the progress of the rebellion. Abingdon, who

was Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, was busy raising

volunteers in the county and university, and arresting

nonconformist ministers and other suspected persons.

Further details of the zeal of Oxford for the royal cause

may be found in the third volume of Anthony Wood's

Diary.

On the savage punishment of the rebels which followed

the suppression of the rising, new evidence is collected in

F. A. Inderwick's Side Lights on the Stuarts (1891). He

succeeds in showing that the number of sufferers has been

exaggerated.

Those who have read Macaulay—and who has not?—

must have had their blood run cold over his graphic

descriptions of the brutality and the butchery of the Bloody

Assize. Having passed through this preliminary stage, one's

natural inclination is to consider whether after all the story

may not have been somewhat exaggerated; whether

Jeffreys was the bloodthirsty and lawless tyrant there

described, and whether those hecatombs of victims existed

in fact or in imagination. Circumstances recently put into

my hands the gaol books of the Western

Circuit, containing
a complete record of the prisoners and of the
convictions
during this remarkable period, and I am
bound to admit
that I do not find the record to be altogether
in accordance
with the statement of Lord Macaulay and of
others who
put the number of the slain at this assize at
figures varying
from three hundred and twenty to seven
hundred. This
gaol-book is, as far as I am aware, the only
original and
authentic record of the proceedings at this
assize. The
entries are made regularly day by day,
recording the name